

# TURNPIKE TALES

by Jim Ford

## **"TURNPIKE TALES" #10**

*(Historical items from the "Madison Bouckville Antique Week" region)*

*By Jim Ford*

The Madison-Bouckville area has been rich in history from the arrival of the first settlers to the present day. As an addition to the website, we have decided to share some of that history in order that the patrons who travel to the Madison-Bouckville Show will have a better understanding of our truly unique region.

### **Bouckville's Buildings Have Had Many Uses – Part 1**

There are many historic buildings in the community of Bouckville. Some were built soon after the original settlers arrived in the Town of Madison. In this segment of "Turnpike Tales," let's take a walk down the main street of Bouckville as you might during the Antiques Show, and offer a little information about these structures.

We will start at the west end of the community, in front of the Cider Street Café. This structure was built as a blacksmith shop prior to 1875. The youngest son of Samuel R. Mott, (of cider fame) Samuel Mott, Jr., bought the shop in 1879 and had two blacksmiths offering their services to the area.

The shop was converted into a grocery store and meat market at a later date and for many years was operated as Matteson's Store. Mr. Matteson offered a great meat selection and even sold bicycles. The author bought his first bicycle at this establishment.

In more recent years, Brad Dixon, who now operates the Solsville Hotel, ran the store. The building, which is currently for sale, is owned by Rick Rowan.

Continuing east and just across the remains of the Chenango Canal, we look to the south to view two structures. The first is a small building which is the home of the Chenango Canal Association. The Association offers information concerning the canal in their museum and also conducts fund-raising events at their location. These efforts are directed toward maintaining a five mile stretch of the canal as it looked during the time in which it was in operation – 1837-1878.

The building was constructed as a barber shop for Frank Shattuck in 1911. At its original location, it blocked the view for motorists trying to enter or exit the Cherry Valley Turnpike. (Rt. 20) A number of accidents prompted Mr. Shattuck to move the building back some 30 feet to the south in 1921. Frank Shattuck's grandson, "Butch" Shattuck, continues to operate a barber shop directly across the street.

Looking a little further south past the Canal Association building, we see the Bouckville Feed Mill. This is the only remaining building from the Mott complex of buildings; those along the canal or those formerly across from Mr. Mott's home. All the rest either burned or have been torn down over the years.

The mill was built by the Peet Brothers (competitors of the Mott Family) in 1882. The buildings owned by the Peet Brothers on both sides of the canal were sold to the Mott Company in 1885. The structure, which later became the Bouckville Feed Mill, was the vinegar plant for the Motts, with underground piping installed down the main street from the cider manufactory across the road from the present Depot Antiques. This unique pipeline delivered fresh juice from the "upper mill to the lower mill."

The vinegar plant was purchased by Ryan & Leland in 1923 and the building has been a continuous feed mill since that date. Many people in the area will remember Ed Baker, who was for many years the very personable owner of the mill.

We continue east and see the Landmark Tavern on the right and the Bouckville Hotel on the left.

The Landmark Tavern structure was designed and built by James E. and William Coolidge between 1847 and 1851. The original purpose of the building was to have individual stores occupy each of the four fronts of the building. We might say that it was the 1850's version of a shopping mall. The stores, which included a general store, hardware store, paint shop and farm equipment sales, among others through the years, proved to very successful. Rooms were also rented on the second floor and storage for the stores was on the third floor. The hoisting wheel and chain to bring the items from the ground behind the building to the third floor can still be seen in the building today.

With larger grocery and hardware stores being built in the urban areas, coupled with more dependable automobiles, business dwindled and the store was sold in 1940 to Mr. Robert Palmiter, a nationally-known antiques dealer. He used the building for his home and antiques shop.

Following the death of Mr. Palmiter in 1968, Andrew Hengst Sr., along with his son, Andrew Hengst Jr., bought the building and opened the Landmark Tavern in September of 1970. It continues to be an excellent dining destination for many area residents and those visiting the annual antiques show.

While visiting the Landmark Tavern, take a close look at the building and imagine the craftsmanship that went into its design and construction. It is amazing to think of the number of loads of cobblestones that were used, how much mortar had to be mixed and how many beams put into place to keep the structure sound for such a long period of time.

The cupola on the top of the building is six-sided. Each side of the cupola, as the story goes, honors one of the six wives James E. Coolidge married during his lifetime. Disease and epidemics seem to have been rampant during this time period. His sixth wife, Mary Smith Coolidge, was married to him at the time of the opening of the stores and did not pass away until 1877.

Across the street from the Landmark Tavern is the Bouckville Hotel. It was built in 1837 by Moses Maynard, an advocate for the Chenango Canal and Sheriff of Madison County.

With the construction of the canal approved by the State Legislature, Maynard knew that the intersection of the canal and the Cherry Valley Turnpike would be an ideal location for a hotel that not only offered lodging, but fine meals as well.

The hotel, known as the "White House," had been a gathering spot for dances, political gatherings and post-game parties until sold and converted to an antiques shop. We can imagine the noise generated from a dance, with the band playing lively music and area residents enjoying one of their main social activities.

Political debates were raucous events. Citizens took their voting responsibilities seriously and tried to back their favorite candidate with words and actions.

Following a baseball game by the famous Bouckville Summits, meals were served at the hotel for both teams and their fans. The party, and of course the stories of the game, would continue for many hours.

Recently, the antiques shop has been sold and a used car dealership uses the site.

Just east of the Landmark Tavern is an antiques shop known as the Bittersweet Bazaar. Built in 1853, it soon became a local billiards parlor and a place where young men, as the newspapers of the day stated; "should not be hanging out and wasting their time." In 1907, it became the home of Frank Parker's Saloon. He used the upstairs portion of the building for his living quarters, as have some of the more recent owners.

The current use of the building as an antiques venue seems to be a more appropriate use of this historic structure.

Next, we look across the roadway and see Canal House Antiques. Mr. Putnam Oliver had the structure built in 1909 and ran a very successful grocery store and meat market. He was known to be one of the most personable citizens of Bouckville.

In 1924, when "Put" purchased a new meat-cutting machine he said that; "he could cut the meat so thin that you couldn't see it at all."

His expertise as a butcher was known throughout the area. This must have been so as one article concerning him, also in 1924, stated that he had 800 cow hides to send to market.

Gasoline was also sold at this establishment and at five other places in Bouckville. That's right, little Bouckville had six filling stations at this time. The fact highlights the popularity of the "Cherry Valley Turnpike" before the construction of the New York State Thruway.

Deanna Boston, the current owner, highlights some of the history of the building with framed photographs and articles concerning Mr. Oliver.

Part 2 of this article will continue our walk up Main Street in Bouckville and explore some more of the historic structures of this community.